

HIGHWAYS, BYWAYS AND DEAD ENDS: SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS IN AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION.

PART ONE: FROM J. J. TERRY TO J. F. KELLY

Introduction

Textbooks are books containing the leading principles of a subject. In Christianity the first textbooks of religion for the young and the initiates were *primers*. Primers began as small books of the Hours. They were shortened versions of the monastic Office or Prayer of the Day, designed for lay people to say in their homes. The first hour of prayer in a monastery is 'prime' so the books were called primers. Primers were often used as first reading books so that eventually 'primer' came to mean a small book that was an introduction to reading and later an elementary introduction to any subject.

In Christendom when there were only Christians (and of course Muslims and Jews but this is a story about Christians), when Catholics and Protestants did not need to delineate themselves from each other, and when few people could read anyway primers and other prayer books were enough for most folk as far as religion books went. They learnt their faith at Mass, at the ceremonies, festivals and plays of the church, through bible stories and prayers and through their culture.

Then Martin Luther invented the catechism, a book of questions and answers that set out for children and adults the basics of their faith. Up until the Reformation there was no need to have religious education textbooks because all western Christians believed and did more or less the same things. But as Christendom fell apart and became the Catholics, the Orthodox, the Protestants and the Anglicans, authorities decided that children and adults needed to know exactly what they believed and what they should do, and they needed to learn both off by heart. At the same time printing made books available to ordinary folk. Ever since we have had religious education textbooks.

In Australian Catholicism there has been a succession of religious education textbooks, some of them official, being promulgated by bishops, plenary councils, or their delegates such as the Catholic education offices. Some have been unofficial, the product of publishing houses of various theological or pedagogical stripes, or individuals enthusiastic for some cause or point of view. Some have been irenic in their intent while some have been defensive, hostile or divisive. Some texts, acceptable and useful in one era have

been revived in another, again to promote some point of view or to restore some real or imagined approach to church or pedagogy that has passed from favour. The textbooks, official and not, have ranged in quality from outstanding, the J. F. Kelly Catechisms of the early 1960s for example, to the mundane and the seriously inadequate.

Texts, Contexts and Teachers

A good teacher can use a bad textbook and make something useful of it because teaching is far more than textbooks. Ineffective teachers can teach badly from the most inspired textbook. The Bible, which is a foundational text rather than a textbook, has frequently been the source of abominable teaching. Teachers bound up in an ideology too can destroy or misrepresent a textbook. When we review textbooks we need to look at the contexts in which they have been used and keep in mind the teachers who used them.

In every textbook there is an implicit or an explicit pedagogy, or pedagogies. A textbook that has three hundred and seventy six questions and answers is most likely to be used as a means of rote learning while a book full of good stories and beautiful illustrations will almost demand to be used differently. In either case, of course, a teacher can over-ride the pedagogy the creator of the textbook presumed though cannot, I suggest never do this entirely. Great textbooks have a way of speaking for themselves but they are best when we give them room to do what they were intended. And every textbook has an ideology, either acknowledged or not. Textbooks are never neutral, nor are the uses of them. When we read we interpret and when we teach we share interpretations. A textbook is someone's interpretation of the leading principles of a subject.

A textbook that becomes universally used in a culture or an institution can shape that culture. The *King James Bible* helped shape what it means to be British and what it means to speak English just as Luther's translations of the *Bible* helped shape German and Germany. Noah Webster's *The American Spelling Book* published in 1817 helped shape what it means to speak and spell American English. Textbooks can be chosen or written with shaping a culture as their main intention. Those being shaped by a textbook are frequently unaware of what is going on but true education includes the teacher and the taught becoming aware of the ideology of their textbooks.

The Problem with Text Books

While I have written, and used, and generally support the idea of textbooks in religion as in other subjects, there are a number of problems with textbooks, some of which are suggested in the preceding paragraphs, there are some others that need to be noted.

When John Henry Newman went to Rome in 1846 to prepare to be a Catholic priest he was disappointed to find that in Rome student priests were taught theology from second-rate textbooks. St Augustine's writing was virtually unknown to the teachers and students and Aquinas was not read by any of them (Trevor, 1974). It was a case of poor textbooks badly used. Even the best textbooks are primers. Good textbooks lead the reader to the foundational texts, or in David Tracy's terminology the 'classics'. In religion that means they lead the reader to the Bible first and to the writers whose work is the basis of Christianity. Hopefully they lead the reader to God. Both Aquinas and Anonymous are credited with the quote, 'Beware the man of one book.' Even good textbooks run the risk of becoming the 'one book' that some people know. Inadequate textbooks and inadequate teaching invariably become ends in themselves and lead readers to think that they are educated in the subject when they are not.

Further, the fact that someone has read a textbook, indeed has memorised it, is no guarantee that the person is educated. Sometimes it is a sign they are not, though people who think that the ability to recite swathes of information is education can fool themselves that they or their pupils have learnt a lot. Textbooks are books containing the leading principles of a subject and are best suited to subjects where the leading principles are straightforward or can be contained. In some disciplines there are better ways to learn the leading principles. This is especially true of some aspects of religion where listening, doing, meditating, watching, and having faith, for example are some of the ways to learn the leading principles of mysticism, prayer, liturgy and holiness.

There is neither a perennial ideology nor a perennial pedagogy though the writing of a textbook privileges some ideology and pedagogy. Ideologies and pedagogies, like clothing and hairstyles go through fashions. Teachers of religion be they bishops or classroom teachers are no less prone to fashion than the rest of humanity and we sometimes confuse a fashion for something more lasting and fight for it with all our might. Some of us think that the pedagogies and ideologies that were fashionable when we were in our prime are, if not the truth, at least clearly superior to the latest fashion.

Choosing Catechisms

Possibly the best known religious education textbooks in the history of Australian Catholicism are the catechisms, first the catechisms used up until the early 1960s, then their replacements until the 1970s, and lately the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Catholics did not accept much of what Luther believed but they liked the idea of the catechism. Ironically Rome has held onto it longer than the Protestants who invented it.

Gerard Sullivan in an article in *Word in Life* (November, 1990) called *On Not Forgetting the Fleury Catechism* gives an account of the catechisms that were used in Australian Catholic schools up to the 1885 plenary council when what became the *Catholic Catechism of Christian Doctrine* was made the official religious education text for Catholic schools for the next eighty years.

From the earliest schools of Father J. J. Therry in the 1820s various catechisms were borrowed from France and Ireland but under the influence of Sydney's Cardinal Moran (archbishop from 1884-1911) and the Irish bishops here, the Australian catechism of 1885 was based squarely on the Irish *Butler's Catechism*.

That the Irish bishops in Australia in 1885 adopted the model of the Irish catechism may not seem surprising. Butler's catechism was used in almost every diocese in Ireland and most of the Catholic flock here were of Irish descent until after the second World War, though, as Patrick O'Farrell points out they quickly became Australian and had little hankering after the Old Country and no inclination, unlike many of their British compatriots, to call anywhere else 'home'. And many of the religious orders who ran the schools for much of the first half of the twentieth century were Irish orders, the Christian Brothers and the Mercy, Brigidine, Charity, and Dominican Sisters for example. Even the Jesuits here were Irish, except for those in South Australia. Many dioceses and religious orders were still importing Irish priests and religious into the 1960s, long after Australian Catholics had anything much in common with Ireland or the Irish church.

The Irish model for the catechism was not the only one available, however. There was at least one other good choice. As Sullivan shows, a French catechism written in 1683 by Claude Fleury had another model of education, and it was commonly used in Ireland and here from 1865 until at least 1880. The Irish and the French churches had a lot of contact in the nineteenth century. Besides French piety had a strong influence on Irish Catholics and via Irish clergy and religious on Australians right up until the 1950s. Our history as a church might be different had we chosen a different textbook.

Sullivan contrasts the Fleury catechism with the Butler's Catechism. Fleury's book, *The Historical Catechism*, is written in non-technical language. It is narrative in style with a few short questions at the end of each chapter. It is strongly influenced by St Augustine's *De catechizandibus rudibus*, accenting the biblical method of storytelling and the personal engagement of teacher and learner. It has a teachers' book so that the teacher is educated as well as the students. There is little accent on a hierarchical church. It has a brief summary of sacred history that is written in the language of children. Its pedagogy stresses story which moves from the concrete to the abstract and includes prayers in the text.

Butler's catechism in contrast is full of questions and answers in adult, technical language, and concepts. It contained four hundred and twenty six questions. The Australian catechism, adapted from it in 1885 pared the Irish book's questions down to three hundred and seventy six, which were to be learnt by rote and recalled on demand. It had no teachers' book. But as Sullivan says, it "fitted naturally into the nineteenth century Catholic defensiveness, sectarianism, doctrinal certainty, fear of modern thought and adherence to Papal authority." It also fitted into their theory of knowledge (see English, 2004) so, as Kenneth Slessor might have said "Catholic children learnt religion in Australia".

The Penny Catechism

The 1885 catechism became the *Catechism of Christian Doctrine* and lasted in Australian Catholic schools until 1964. It was sometimes called 'the penny catechism' even when by 1962 it had risen to nine pence at a time when it cost about one shilling, or twelve pence for a child to go to the Saturday matinee at the local picture theatre. It varied from state to state; in the colour of the cover and in the wording of the questions it asked and the answers it gave. It did not vary in its approach to knowledge or in its pedagogy. For the catechisms knowledge was an object to be passed on unchanged and uninterpreted, and to be learnt by rote. Teachers explained but they did not interpret. Pupils received and were not expected to interpret either.

The 1962 version of the New South Wales *Catechism of Christian Doctrine* is a compendium of theological statements presented as facts. It owes little to any kind of creative or critical thinking. The writers of the catechism view reality and society as complete, static and unchanging. The world it describes is one of well-defined essences and abstract, universal concepts where knowledge is a datum to be passed on from one to the next rather than something we discover. There is but one answer to each question irrespective of the

experience of the reader. Nothing is open to revision.

In the catechism scripture is used as proof texts, or small quotes are taken literally to make some doctrinal point. The biblical context of the quotes is irrelevant; that they are open to different interpretations is ignored. For example we know that Peter, and therefore the pope is head of the Church because Christ promised St Peter, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church; and I will give thee the keys of heaven." On one of the questions that split the church at the Reformation the answer is clear: 'Q. Has the Church the power to grant indulgences? A. The Church has the power to grant indulgences; *Whatsoever*, says Christ to St Peter, *thou shalt loose upon earth, it shall be loosed in heaven.*'

On another question that divided Catholics from Protestants the catechism declares that we on earth can benefit the souls in Purgatory by our prayers. Its proof text is 2 Machabees 12:46, "It is a holy and a wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from their sins." That the Protestants do not accept Machabees as canonical and so are not convinced by the quote is not addressed.

James Mc Auley in his short poem, *One thing at Least* says, "loving must be learnt by heart/ If it's to be any good." It is as good a comment on rote learning as any I know. Some things are well learnt 'by heart'. But McAuley is too wise to say 'by rote'. We learn some things by heart because they are beautiful, or memorable, or because they might one day save our lives, or our souls, or because they save us time by being on hand when we need them. But learning nonsense or banality or that which oppresses us by rote has nothing to do with education or enriching our lives. It has nothing to do with the heart. Instead it sears souls and gives schooling a bad name. Some of the material in the penny catechism was like this. Luckily, many who learnt it quickly forgot much of it and were free to get on with their lives. But for some it left them stuck in their childishness.

On the whole this catechism is competently, even well written and some of its phrases are memorable. Some of the answers in the old catechism do enliven. Two that still give me life are the answers to 'What is prayer?' and 'Why did God make me?' They are, "Prayer is a raising of the mind and heart to God", and "God made me to know, love and serve him here on earth and to be happy with him for ever in heaven."

M.B. Hanrahan – 1877-1953

Michael Hanrahan was a New Zealand born Christian Brother who spent most of his adult life at

Strathfield in New South Wales and wrote a series of articles *The Teaching of the Catechism* in the first seven numbers of *The Australasian Catholic Record*, from 1924 to December 1925. Hanrahan, one of few religious education theorists in Australia then was also an outstanding teacher.

The thrust of Hanrahan's articles is that the Catholic religious education was in deep trouble and the main problem was the catechism. "Education in religion," he says, "is carried on in the obsolete wearisome manner of past centuries." The answer would be to discover the right form of textbook and the right method of teaching it then things would be well. But using the current catechism was not adequate religious education at all:

Unfortunately there has been a strong tendency in schools to teach words, definitions and rules before the pupils have gained sufficient knowledge of the objects and experiences of life that give meaning to these abstractions. The power to repeat verbal forms has been taken as sufficient guarantee that the children grasped the ideas these forms expressed. Teachers failed to realize what Kant so laconically stated: 'General notions without sense percepts are empty' (Hanrahan, 1924).

Then he lists those things that are necessary to a real educational environment. First the children have to find that what they are learning constantly appeals to past experiences. "Nothing absolutely new can be learnt", he says. Secondly, if children are expected to attend to something it must have a 'natural or acquired attentiveness'. It is the task of the teacher to make knowing attractive because if the feelings are not aroused the will remains unmoved.

Hanrahan also notes that if religion is to be an attractive part of the lives of children it has to be correlated with everything they are learning, it has to be suited to the capacity of the hearers and it has to be expressed through action, drawing, song, reproduction or some form of physical or emotional involvement. Otherwise there is no learning. He laments that "the concrete and interesting teaching of religion by narrative" employed by the church up until the Middle Ages has ever since been overwhelmed by tedious reliance on catechisms "drawn up by divines who aimed at condensation and theological precision." Not all these divines lived in the distant past. He then describes what he thinks necessary for good teaching. He begins with initiative. A good teacher is not caught up in rigid uniformity but tries different approaches. The rote repetition of words is not good teaching because it

does not lead students to be *doers*, it does not accomplish the aim of education, "to set another independent mind in motion". Students need to be occupied with tasks they enjoy. 'Do' is to be used by teachers far more often than 'don't'. Teachers should always be positive. Strong positive motives need to be given to students because children learn when they are interested. The best discipline is self-discipline. "The traditional motives of punishments and rewards are second-rate and yield only second-rate discipline". "Some forms of education, such as prizes and class placing, are thoroughly bad and anti-social as well as being a permanent discouragement to children of only moderate ability."

All of this, he says will avail nothing without the influence of the teacher's personality and he lists attributes that any good teacher needs such as scholarship, enthusiasm, fairness and sincerity. The teacher must be thoroughly conversant with the material and have a clear insight into the minds and hearts of the students. Religion at different stages of the child's development must be taught in different ways. Memorising and too much appeal to reason have no place for small children. Teaching should be mainly through stories and history. Eventually children should write their own catechisms. The matter of lessons should be presented in a concrete way right through primary school. The method of set questions and answers should be abandoned for a method that answers questions the students are asking. These are the questions and answers they should write in their own catechisms. Books given to children should be interesting and beautiful in themselves so that reading them will be a pleasure to the senses as well as the mind. He sums this up by saying that the teacher must teach as the child learns. We look to the students for our methods.

Bible History

Until the 1960s Catholics in Australia did not know the Bible. The Mass was said in Latin, including all the bible readings. Many Catholics did not follow the Mass but said the rosary quietly to themselves as the Mass proceeded at the altar in a language they could not understand and often at a volume they could not hear.

Some Catholics at Mass read prayers from small prayer books, *The Treasure of the Sanctuary*, for example, or *The Garden of the Soul*. Some Catholics owned and used the *Roman Missal*, the *St Joseph Missal* or the *Marian Missal*. These contained the prayers and readings of the Mass but nowhere near covered the whole Bible or even the New Testament. Even Catholics who attended weekday Mass year after year covered little of the Bible. The same readings were used for most Marian feasts. Many priests, instead of saying the

Mass of the day used the same votive masses day after day with the same few readings. Many priests and many bishops were not familiar with the Bible.

In school children read bible histories, a junior bible history for primary school and another, Schuster's *Bible History* for secondary. These consisted of bible stories retold in a simple, literalist way as if the creation, Jonah and the whale, the Exodus, and the crucifixion were all the same genre, and as if the gospels were 'lives of Jesus', harmonised to offer what was thought to be a historical account (Trainor, 2004). And St Paul and the other epistle writers hardly rated a mention. St Paul was a favourite of Protestants and so was under suspicion for most Catholics. The illustrations in the bible histories reinforced the literalist message. Noah's flood, Moses on Sinai, the Last Supper, and the Good Samaritan were all drawn in the same style as if they were of the same era and the same historical authenticity. Most Catholics in Australia who died before 1960 went to their graves having read and seen no more of the Bible than this. But, literalist or not, at least the bible history told stories and children became familiar with them. This is no bad thing.

The Catholic Truth Society

Some teachers used Catholic Truth Society pamphlets in their religion lessons. For example Sister Dolores White was a Dominican nun at Strathfield when she completed an MA in English at Sydney University in 1929. At the same time she was corresponding with Frank Sheed, the Australian Catholic apologist who had married Maisie Ward and was a regular on Hyde Park Corner in London defending the Catholic faith to all comers and promoting the Catholic Truth Society (White 1929). Sister Dolores and Sheed discussed how girls in Catholic schools might become educated in their faith and how they too might become apologists for it. Catholic Truth Society pamphlets were inexpensive, short statements on many topics of concern to Catholics and were sold on an honour system from the back of all Catholic churches. The pamphlets told the lives of saints and other remarkable Catholics or contained information on other religions and other Christian faiths. In the style of the day Protestants and Anglicans were spoken of as 'other religions'. They also discussed moral issues, recounted the church's social teaching and reprinted Roman encyclicals, for example *Rerum novarum* and *Quadragesimo anno*. Their style was more or less apologetic and usually was both energetic and engrossing. Some were written in Australia by people such as Father Rumble, others published here or in Britain were the work of such luminaries as Fathers Martindale, Ronald Knox and Philip Hughes, and Dom Cuthbert Butler. Many Catholic adults had most of their religious education from

these pamphlets, as did some Catholic teenagers who were avid readers or whose teachers used them in class.

Apologetics

An apology is, first of all, a vindication or a defence. It is only later a "regretful acknowledgement of a fault". Apology comes from the Greek word for defence, *apologia*. In January 1864 Charles Kingsley in a book review criticised John Henry Newman asserting, "Father Newman informs us that truth for its own sake need not be, and on the whole ought not to be, a virtue of the Roman clergy." Newman's response was *Apologia Pro Vita Sua, A Defence of My Life*; his autobiography that ranks with Augustine's *Confessions* both as a work of literature and as a Christian classic.

Apologetics is a form of discourse that means "a defence of Christianity". Defence is necessary when you are being attacked, or you think you are being attacked. Some people always think they are being attacked. Christianity in various eras has felt attacked and Catholicism since the Reformation has especially felt this. At various times, the reign of Pius IX, Pius X, and Pius XXII being particular instances, defence has been taken more seriously and so has apologetics.

In Sydney Michael Sheehan, the auxiliary bishop from 1922-1937 wrote a text called *Apologetics and Catholic Doctrine: A Course in Religious Instruction for Schools and Colleges*, colloquially referred to as *Sheehan's Apologetics*. Michael Sheehan was a classics scholar at Maynooth, near Dublin. He was a gifted scholar and a talented writer who was made a bishop and came to Sydney expecting to be the next Archbishop. But Michael Kelly, the incumbent lived to be very old in an era when archbishops did not retire and were loathe to die, and the Apostolic Delegate, much to the annoyance of Daniel Mannix in Melbourne and James Duhig in Brisbane, and the chagrin of Sheehan let it be known that the next Archbishop of Sydney would not be an Irishman. So Sheehan retired to Ireland and died there in 1945, one of the great 'might-have-beens' of the Australian church, to make way for Norman Gilroy who was not a classics scholar.

Sheehan's *Apologetics* was published in Dublin and went through four editions and had sold over three hundred thousand copies by 1955. It begins, "Apologetics is the science concerned with the defence of the Catholic religion. Its aim is to prove from reason the Divine Authority of the Catholic Church." The book sets out to, and claims to accomplish conclusive proof, that is proof that it is unreasonable to question, that the Catholic church is the one and only guide of faith on earth. The

proof is based on miracles, "attested to by men whose truthfulness and impartiality, and whose knowledge of the facts they report exclude all reasonable doubt and give us absolute certainty." He then says that the reader will understand that human testimony, properly checked, is a most certain means of arriving at the truth.

Sheehan reads the Gospels as a history text that can be taken literally. He does not use any form of criticism or the early attempts at redaction criticism that were well in use by other Christian scholars in his time. Catholics did not use twentieth century biblical methods when Sheehan was writing.

He shows little awareness of the difficulty of properly checking human testimony. No one post-the-assassination of President Kennedy in Dallas, for example would now so blithely presume that even reliable humans in total good faith will all agree or be right about what happened, even when they have a film of it and an audio recording. His book, though clear, intelligent and forthright and full of information that an intelligent young Catholic of the time could relish, takes no account of the context in which church texts were written and he gives no credit to the faith or good will of those Christians and others who question his assumptions.

Sheehan's *Apologetics* is an example of one part of a culture trying to prove to itself and others outside it that it is the only true way of being. It can work as a textbook only in a time and place where those reading it protect themselves or are protected from others by some form of isolation. Sheehan's *Apologetics* has recently been revised and republished in Australia.

Faith and Morals

In the nineteen fifties Jesuit Father T.V. Fleming, Professor of Theology at Canisius College Pymble wrote two books called *Faith and Morals*. Part One was called *Faith* and Part Two *Morals*. Both books were written as texts for senior classes in Catholic secondary schools at a time when senior students were aged fourteen to seventeen. The aim of the books was "forming a right conscience and providing motivation and means to *live* according to it."

Fleming, like the old catechism, always begins with abstract, universal principles and deduces the 'right' answer to every question from these. His conclusions are secure and complete. That some answers are highly questionable is never admitted nor is there any acknowledgement that his method of arguing is one among many possible approaches to ethics. His work is a form of muscular Christianity, Chesty Bond Catholicism. His section headed *Causes of failure* begins, "The weakling

lacks sufficient determination to fight temptation from the beginning." My religion teacher at the time referred to anyone who disagreed with him or whom he did not like as 'a half-man'. Goodness for these men was synonymous with a square jaw.

In his section on suicide and euthanasia Fleming declares that the Catholic church has "always uncompromisingly condemned (euthanasia) as murder or suicide." But he notes that in ancient times God ordered the Jews to kill non-combatants among the nations they defeated in war, "But in those cases no injustice was done, since human life belongs entirely to God to dispose of as He wishes" (p. 130). This is a moral argument full of problems, and this is a primitive God that many Christians and Jews find it hard to believe in.

His moral principles for unmarried couples begin, "It is a mortal sin deliberately to enjoy or desire any sex pleasure." 'Mortal sin' in those days meant, "If you die in that state you will go straight to hell." Even then many I went to school with just did not believe Fleming's view of sex. Some who did are still struggling with the harm done them by such a view of their bodies and the kind of God it implies.

In his introduction Fleming strongly recommends to teachers using his book an American text *Moral Guidance* by Edwin F. Healy S. J. Healy's book, like Fleming's sees reality as fixed and unchanging. It claims it can "set down in detail the exact degree of evil involved in the violation of (our) obligations." Healy is subtler than Fleming but they both inhabit a world that cannot admit of incompleteness and that is closed to revision. They both show no awareness of the moral philosophy and theology stirring in European Catholic thought at the time. They were providing those of us growing up Catholic in the 1950s with little that would prepare us for the great changes in Australia that we were soon to face.

Rereading Fleming after all these years helps me understand why so many of my generation, brought up to think like this, walked away from the institutional church when they had to make sense of their own experience or when they tried to reconcile the God of Jesus Christ with this material that was incompatible with their lives.

John F. Kelly's *My Way to God*

Hanrahan's articles on religious education in the 1920s and 1930s did not have an immediate effect. In 1955 brother Christian Moe, a De La Sale Brother writing in *Our Apostolate* bemoaned the attitude to scripture of most religious education teachers (Moe, 1955). He meant by teachers the Sisters and Brothers, as there were few other teachers in Catholic schools then. But help was on the way.

In Europe before the Second World War the catechetical thinkers Hanrahan had been reading were having an effect. They had written on liturgy and the Good News of Salvation and the result was the kerygmatic approach to religious education. It took much longer to reach Australia. The main flowering of the kerygmatic approach in Australia was the 1963 *Catholic Catechism*, Books One and Two, and the *My Way to God* books for lower primary.

The Catholic Catechism, Books One and Two, written by Monsignor John F. Kelly, a Melbourne priest, and modeled on German catechisms were issued and prescribed for use in the Catholic schools of Australia by the Australian hierarchy on 1 September, 1963. The books for use in Years Three and Four called *My Way to God* were issued in the two following years. Monsignor Kelly was awarded an honorary doctorate by St Patrick's College, Manly to recognise the work he had done in preparing the new catechisms.

The 'penny catechism' with its imprimatur from Cardinal Gilroy dated 8/9/43 had its eighteenth and last edition printed at St Vincent's Boys' Home Westmead in 1962. The pedagogy that underpinned it was being replaced. Michael Hanrahan, forty years after he wrote the articles in *The Catholic Record* was being heeded by officialdom.

The Kelly catechisms, especially the teachers' book, helped educate a whole generation of young and not so young teachers in the ideas that led to and were then being expounded at Vatican II. They were solidly scriptural, had sound theology that was used in a creative way, and they were readable in a way that challenged both teacher and student. Canon Drinkwater in *The Furrow*, the English catechetical journal, used a cricketing metaphor to suggest they were the best things around in English at the time. The teachers' book for Book Two was full of useful advice, help for teaching, and a thorough bibliography and, like the students' books, an enthusiasm for the best of Catholic wisdom and culture. That the Kelly catechisms came out when they did was a blessing in that they helped educate many students and teachers to be ready for Vatican II. They led many young and older teachers to take theology and scripture seriously and to study both at university level. Combined with the liturgical revival that was in full swing even before Vatican II and the enthusiasm generated by leading Catholic clergy and laity they made Catholicism seem creative in ways it had not been and helped for a short while to dispel the defensiveness that had been predominant for so long.

But few Catholics in Australia had been prepared for change. The general level of theological,

liturgical and scriptural education of Catholics, even of priests and bishops was not up to the catechisms. These books demanded creative and critical thinking, they demanded that teachers read theology and think about it, they relied on an approach to scripture that was neither literalist nor a search for proof texts. Michael Trainor notes that the Catholic approach to the Bible between 1900 and 1940 had been largely one of suspicion and fear. After that there had been a gradual but painful assimilation of modern approaches to the Bible (Trainor 2004). That had been slower in Australia.

While many Catholics were enthused by the Kelly catechisms some, including bishops and clergy were frightened of them or did not understand them and reacted against them. Then they were overtaken by social change in Australia and all manner of change in the Catholic church here and in the rest of the world.

PART TWO: THE RENEWAL OF THE EDUCATION OF FAITH

**Bliss it was to be alive,
but to be young was very heaven.**
The 1970s was a vibrant time in Catholic religious education in Australia. The two lines from Wordsworth capture it well for me. The liveliness was due to the change, enthusiasm, reaction, desire for an intellectual Catholicism, and the hope that had been growing in the Australian church since the 1950s.

Some of the vibrancy was due to increased prosperity and social change in western societies, and particularly in Australia. Some of it was due to changing pedagogies in education in general, to the increasing laicisation of the Catholic teaching body and to a flowering of tertiary education opportunities for young Catholics as well as for the general community. This led to some lay Catholics becoming literate, indeed leaders in theology, scripture, ethics, liturgy and in bringing twentieth century art, literature and philosophy into conversation with Catholicism. In Melbourne from 1946 some Jesuits and lay Catholics, for example the poet Vincent Buckley, had begun the journal *20th Century*. In Sydney from 1959 to 1968 R. M. Gascoigne and others published *Manna*, another small journal of intelligent lay Catholic opinion.

In 1965 the Documents of Vatican II were published in cheap paperback form. In February 1970 the Italian Episcopal Conference published *Il rinnovamento della Catechesi*. In August 1970 the Australian Episcopal Conference published a translation of *Il rinnovamento* with a supplement and called it *The Renewal of the Education of Faith*. This book directed at clergy and all teachers of religious education contains none of the

defensiveness of the older forms of catechesis. It is a book full of the spirit of *Gaudium et spes*, the Vatican II document on the Church in the modern world and draws on the documents of Vatican II, the Scriptures and on Paul VI.

Chapter one begins, 'In history, the church is the universal sacrament of the salvation and life that comes from God.' It urges teachers to be evangelists who announce to all people that the Church is at their service and that God is a revealing God and that Christ is the mediator and perfect realization of the mystery of God. It is a book filled with hope.

In 1966 an American De La Salle Brother Gabriel Moran, who was both a theologian and an educator had published two books, *Theology of Revelation* and *Catechesis of Revelation* that introduced to religious educators the idea that revelation is continuous and not static. As well as in Scripture and Tradition, God continues to speak through an individual's personal experience and through everyday events. This view regarded life experience as a source of the sacred.

At the same time religious education became much more difficult to teach in secondary schools in Australia. Western societies like France, Britain, the United States and Australia changed quickly at this time. There was both a mood of optimism and, at the same time uneasiness. The arms race, the Vietnam War, the student revolutions of 1968, and changes in sexual ethics brought about in part by more reliable contraception were just some of the events affecting how people in the west thought and acted. In Catholicism *Humanae Vitae*, the Second Vatican Council, positive and negative reactions to the council, the threat of schism, the collapse of anti-Catholicism, and the way Catholics moved into the middle class, the Labor Party Split and the polarization of Catholic bishops along political and theological lines.

Many of the reasons for Catholics in Australia to be a united, cohesive group disappeared. Catholicism in Australia quickly became a different place from the sub-culture it had been especially since the Irish bishops organized it after the 1870s. Then in the 1970s Catholic schools became financially viable due to government money and gradually the teaching staff in them changed from almost all nuns and brothers to almost all lay people.

At this time too educators, teachers mostly, who had teacher education and experience of teaching in schools, and university level education in theology, or Scripture, or the newly developing area of catechetics became responsible for preparing religious education texts and syllabuses and for educating the young and renewing the older

teachers in religious education. Up until the 1960s most religious education curriculum material in Australia was written or compiled by priests or bishops, often by men with no school experience or teacher training. Religious education was often seen as applied theology rather than as something that happened in schools, and it was often seen as child sized bites of adult religion. Ironically, at the same time adult education principles seldom had a place in adult religious education. Adults were taught as if they were children, frequently using the *Catechism of Christian Doctrine* as a syllabus.

Cripac Press

In the 1950s and 1960s there had been several lay run Catholic journals, *Manna*, for instance. In 1964 there began a lay run Catholic publisher of religious education resources. This was Cripac Press. For a time it became the *de facto* national supplier of religious education resources for Catholic schools in Australia. Cripac Press was an initiative of several members of the Ballarat Adult Lay Apostolate. It was suggested by the then Fr John Molony (now Emeritus Manning Clark Professor of Australian History) and began as a house to publish books on Christian social issues in 1964. Key lay Catholics involved were Jim Ross and Dr Gerald Caine. Shortly afterwards they established a headquarters for the movement and a bookshop in Sturt St, Ballarat. At the time Ballarat, mainly due to the efforts of former full-time YCW members, was one of the few dioceses in Australia with an adult education movement.

That it was YCW inspired adult education in Ballarat is important. YCW, or Young Christian Workers, was the initiative of a Belgian priest, later a cardinal, Joseph Cardijn (1882-1967). Cardijn saw his mission as a priest as being to educate young Christian working class people in their faith. He approved of the English trade unionist Ben Tillet who said that one of his aims was 'to enable each worker in particular to educate his own individuality, to uplift himself morally and intellectually, so that he may feel the pressing need of more well-being and more justice' (Catholic Authors, 2005). Cardijn's summed up his approach to education as 'See, Judge, Act.' YCW is a life centered, activist way of bringing the Scriptures into the individual and corporate lives of the young and bringing about personal and social change. It aims to teach Catholics to think. It has a branch, Young Christian Students to do the same thing for people still at school. Its approach is evident in Cripac Press textbooks and in the growth of YCS in Catholic schools in the 1960s and 1970s.

Just as Cripac Press was setting up Fr Kevin Murphy, then Director of Catholic Education for the Ballarat diocese produced a series of

worksheets based on the *My Way to God* books and the J. F. Kelly Catechisms recently published by the Australian Bishops. Cripac published Murphy's worksheets. At the same time Garry and Moira Eastman began a new style parish magazine, *The Marian*, in Swan Hill to promote the ideas of Vatican II. This led to Moira Eastman preparing two adult study programs for Easter and Pentecost in 1966. Seeing these, Murphy suggested to the Eastmans who were high school teachers in the state education system, that they produce a magazine for Catholic students in state high schools. With the support of Fr Frank Martin at the Catholic Education Office Melbourne an editorial committee was set up and Cripac began publishing a small journal, *Move Out* in 1967.

Garry Eastman was recruited to work for the Catholic Education Office later in 1967 and became the editor of *Move Out* and the new primary school material *Let's Go Together*. These were produced primarily for catechetical teaching in government schools but were also immediately adopted by a large number of Catholic schools. It was the large sales of *Move Out* and *Let's Go Together* to Catholic schools that made them and subsequent magazines and texts viable. Attempts were made to enlist the support of the Sydney Confraternity of Christian Doctrine but this was unsuccessful and Sydney continued to produce its own material. It still does.

In 1969 Cripac, with Jim Ross as business manager, moved to Melbourne and Garry Eastman became a full-time employee. By 1972 the company was producing four magazines, *Say Yes!*, *Move Out*, *Shalom* and *Tempo*, all of which were used in Catholic schools throughout the country, and had an extensive editorial committee network.

In the same year, the staff bought the company and renamed it Dove Communications. The key editors were Garry and Moira Eastman, Madeleine Wright, David Lovell, Win Guatta, Shirley MacDonald and Wendy Poussard. These people often traveled around Australia giving lectures on the programs and religious education for dioceses and religious orders. There was a strong ecumenical movement in religious education at the time and staff worked closely with the Joint Board of Christian Education (Uniting Church) and the General Board of Religious Education (Anglican Church). Staff also played an active part in national gatherings organised by Dr Cliff Wright from the Australian Council of Churches.

In 1976 the magazines were converted to textbooks with more extensive curriculum frameworks. These, under various titles over the years, became the company's mainstay and enabled Dove

Communications to publish in other less profitable areas.

Dove published *Children of the Kingdom*, the first primary school program for Catholic schools since *My Way to God* in 1964. Anne Burgess (now Dr Anne Benjamin, Director of Catholic Education in the Parramatta diocese) was the director of the project. To help finance *Children of the Kingdom*, the company invited Jim Rush to become a major shareholder.

As well as Dove staff in-servicing Catholic school teachers Dove brought various scholars like Richard McBrien and writers and performers of liturgical music such as Joe Wise to Australia. In partnership with Catholic Education Offices many of these overseas visitors had contact with a large proportion of Catholic school religious educators.

In 1986 Dove Communications was bought by William Collins. The name changed to CollinsDove and following the News Corporation takeover of Collins in 1989, it became HarperCollins Religious. After a while they stopped producing religious education textbooks for Australia.

Sowing the Seeds of Disharmony

Bishops are descended from the New Testament role of 'presbyter' (McBrien 1981). The prerequisites for someone chosen to be a presbyter in the New Testament are that he can manage a household well (1 Tim 3:4-5); he can organise, maintain stability in the community, and when necessary, combat dangerous innovation (Titus 1:9). He must not be a recent convert to Christianity nor be married more than once (1 Tim 3:2-6) and he must be adept at pastoral skills. Paul describes the role of the bishop stressing this last prerequisite, 'Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you guardians, to feed the church of the Lord which he obtained with his own blood' (Acts 20:28-29). John Hill, in a short consideration of orthodoxy among bishops gives particular weight to this last Paulian exhortation. 'True orthodoxy is linked with pastoral sense', he says, that is the ability to feed the church of the Lord (Hill, 2004).

In the 1950s in Australia the Labor party split. The Catholic Church was not the cause of the split but because of the Movement, a creation of B. A. Santamaria, the Church was deeply involved in the split and was damaged in ways that persisted for a long time. The damage was not limited to politics; it extended to the whole of Catholic life, including religious education, and some of the bishops were involved in causing the damage.

Robert Murray in his 1984 book *The Split: Australian Labor in the Fifties* is one chronicler of

and an insightful commentator on the Labor Split. In a short article in *Quadrant* in October 2004, *Looking Back on Evatt and the Split*, Murray comments that at the split, "the clergy generally did not bathe themselves with glory, mainly through ignorance. The Catholic Church mostly was out of its depth in handling both the Movement and the split." Archbishop James Carroll in Sydney, he notes, was one of the few who grasped the problem but the political inadequacy of most of the other bishops led to a divisive mess. This divisive mess had serious effects on religious education textbooks and on religious education all round. This is especially true during and after the attacks on *Come Alive* in the 1970s.

In his account of the Labor split and the Catholic Church's role in it, *Crusade or Conspiracy: Catholics and the Anti-Communist Struggle in Australia*, Bruce Duncan is severely critical of the late archbishop of Melbourne, Daniel Mannix. He says of him:

His duty as a bishop was to promote harmony in the church; instead he fostered division, connived at the misuse of Church authority, failed to discipline Santamaria and his allies for the calumny and vehement personal attacks on the moral integrity of other Catholics, and allowed his authority to be exploited for partisan political interests (Duncan 2001, p. 390).

Hubris is arrogance that leads to disaster. Murray, talking of the split says the "hubristic excesses of the early 1950s left Santamaria and much of the Catholic leadership embarrassed for decades afterwards" (Murray, 2004). Would that Catholics were only embarrassed! By the end of the nineteen fifties Catholics were deeply split politically and the pattern was set for at least fifty years. Splits based on theology, scripture, church life, and ethics were soon to follow.

Duncan says of many of the bishops in the 1950s that they were "extraordinarily naïve and ill-informed about basic issues of economics and politics." Their naivety in these areas was compounded by the fact that there were no clerical intellectuals here to guide them and Catholic lay people were just beginning, tentatively to debate theological issues (Duncan 2004 p. 389). Duncan attributes the naivety and ill information of the bishops to the fact that the 'theological colleges of the day were small, clerical and isolated'. Though most were good pastors many of the bishops, even though those trained in Rome, lacked breadth of education, not only in politics and economics but in theology, scripture, education and philosophy as well.

So the "calumny and vehement personal attacks on the moral integrity of other Catholics" that was allowed by Mannix and carried on by Santamaria and others at the time of the political split continued in the aftermath of Vatican II and spread to liturgy, theology, the ordinary life of Catholics, and to the changes in religious education.

How much the calumny and the vehement personal attacks on the moral integrity of Catholic religious educators and others who embraced Vatican II were due to hubris is hard to say. Most of the bishops were simply not prepared for the changes in church and society nor were they equipped to adequately respond to them. At the start of the 1950s Catholics were united and they attended Sunday Mass and all the other paraphernalia of the pre-Vatican II devotional church in large numbers. This was the only church they knew.

Possibly Mannix and Santamaria and those who followed them thought that this would go on forever so they could do and say whatever they liked. After all Mannix had known this kind of church for nearly one hundred years. Maybe they thought that wrong has no rights and that the only ones right were those who agreed with them. This is the impression they gave. Maybe they were so used to doing this in politics that they just allowed it to spill over into the rest of Catholic life without thinking. But this kind of church was about to disappear and their actions helped split the church in Australia, as well as the politics. The split in the church, in the view of this article was much more serious than that in the Labor Party. Its effects showed up in the following years in fights about religious education textbooks.

Come Alive

In 1970-1971 under the auspices of the Australian Catholic bishops publishing house E. J. Dwyer produced nine units of a new religious education textbook, *Come Alive*. Three Sisters of Mercy Sister Ligouri (Pauline Smith), Sister St James (Maureen McInerney), and the editor Sister St Thomas (Rosemary Crumlin) are listed as 'Associates'. Albert Falzon did the photography and design. Father Maurie Duffy is named as 'Director'.

In *Come Alive: Teachers Manual* (1971) the writers make three points: the material is a work of human hands, it is not a catechism, and it is an instrument of work for a group within a classroom situation. They also acknowledge that a large number of people contributed to the program, that it has gone through many versions and that it comes out at a moment of renewal, change and difficult times. They note that some of the workers on the program wished to remain anonymous. As it turned out this might have been as well for some of them.

Gerard Rummery, tracing the main lines in Catholic religious education in the years since the 1950s notes that there has been a clear shift away from an instructional model based almost exclusively on the catechism, to a greater use of the Bible and a much greater emphasis on how Catholic faith is to be lived. And there has been a growing distance between the instructional model and a more broadly based educational approach that is less prescriptive and more aware of personal needs and differences (Rummery, 2001). *Come Alive* was a clear shift away from instructional learning and a strong move toward a broadly based religious education prepared for once by school teachers who knew what it was like to teach religion in a classroom.

In the 1920s Brother Hanrahan had written that in a real educational environment children have to find that what they are learning constantly appeals to past experiences. What they are expected to learn must have a "natural or acquired attentiveness" and it the task of the teacher to make knowing attractive because if the feelings are not aroused the will remains unmoved. Hanrahan also noted that if religion is to be an attractive part of the lives of children it has to be correlated with everything they are learning, it has to be suited to the capacity of the hearers and it has to be expressed through action, drawing, song, reproduction or some form of physical or emotional involvement. Otherwise there is no learning. *Come Alive* took his approach to education seriously.

Come Alive is important as a religious education textbook for several reasons. The first one is that it is a marked change in methodology in religious education and as marked a change in the theory of knowledge it espouses. It is moving from a teacher-learner model of education to a learner-learner model. That is it presumes that the adult in the class has to learn as she or he teaches, just as the child in the class teaches and learns. It moves away from an instructional view of education.

Instructional education is teacher centered. The power is in the hands of the instructor. It teaches as if what is taught is self evidently true and is an object to be passed on rather than a life to be lived. It is easier to employ for a weak or unprepared teacher. In the hands of a weak or unprepared teacher it takes no account of the readiness of the students, or their individual needs. It suits subjects in which instructions can be readily given. When the author was in the school cadets in the 1950s we learnt to strip and reassemble the bren-gun: 'Piston, barrel, butt, body, bipod.' For the assembling and stripping of a gun this works every time. In a battle knowing this could save your life. But it does not help people think or use their initiative, or critique

what they are learning and apply it to their own experience. And when the gun becomes obsolete the knowledge is useless.

Come Alive had a mixed reception. There is a good account of the attempts both to scuttle and to support *Come Alive* in Lawlor's chapter in *Echo and Silence* (Lawlor, 2001). B. A. Santamaria initiated an attack on it called *What's Wrong With Come Alive?* though, typically he took great pains to hide his involvement (Lawlor 2001). The bishop of Sandhurst, Bernard Stewart issued a small book, *The Catholic Religion: with Peter and Under Peter* (1970) that listed what could and could not be taught in his diocese and what texts could and could not be used. *Come Alive* could not be used. *The Catholic Religion: with Peter and Under Peter* is a poorly produced, intellectually weak jumble of a book that uses the scriptures and the Vatican II documents as proof texts to defend Bishop Stewart's approach to education. Like most tendentious books the reception of *What's Wrong With Come Alive?* and *With Peter and Under Peter* depended on the tendencies of those who read it.

Thomas Kuhn, in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962) says of paradigm shifts that "when an individual or group first produces a synthesis able to attract most of the next generation's practitioners, the older schools gradually disappear" (in Pajares, 2005). Those with older views "are simply read out of the profession and their work is subsequently ignored. If they do not accommodate their work to the new paradigm, they are doomed to isolation or must attach themselves to some other group" (in Pajares, 2005). The new generation's view need not be better but it will prevail because eventually the older generation dies out.

Many religious education teachers welcomed *Come Alive* and the methods it espoused. It attracted most of the next generation's practitioners. Though supporters of both Santamaria and Stewart have continued to attack religious education as it takes place in Catholic schools ever since, the instructional method of religious education did not survive *Come Alive*. *Come Alive* is a textbook that is more important for what it started than for itself, which is just what its authors stated as their hope in the Letter of Introduction in teachers' book.

Learning from *Come Alive*

There are many lessons to be learnt from the problems surrounding the introduction of *Come Alive*. The Lawlor article covers most of them (Lawlor 2002). I want to add several things. When the series came out in 1970-1971 many teachers were moving away from or had moved away from instructional learning in their other teaching. Now they were doing it in religious education. Many

were aware of the weaknesses in their own religious education, especially the drawbacks of rote learning and the lack of congruence that much they had learnt had with their own lives. The Kelly catechisms had taught teachers that there was much more to religious education than learning someone else's opinions off by rote and doing what the textbook writers prescribed for those wanting to live a good life.

But non-instructional learning, particularly if it is some form of critical education, presumes in the teacher both significant preparation and a sound knowledge of the area being taught, as well as an ability to discover new things and be open to learning. Hanrahan's claim that the task of the teacher is "to make knowing attractive because if the feelings are not aroused the will remains unmoved" demands of the teacher that they know what they are doing and are enthusiastic to do it. Non-instructional learning is not the haven for the unprepared or the inadequate teacher that instructional learning is. Not all teachers could measure up to the new demands. Even good teachers under the pressure of large classes and rapid change in society and education generally did not always have time to prepare. And they found both that their pre-service preparation in religion was seriously inadequate and chances for ongoing training were insufficient.

I have written elsewhere of the lack of formal tertiary religious education among Catholic school teachers before the 1980s (English, 2002). The writing of people such as Christopher Geraghty is evidence that despite the long time they had spent in the seminary many priests were not well educated in religion either (Geraghty, 2002; 2003).

Come Alive coincided with power struggles and generational change in the Australian church, and with great confusion among Catholics (Russell, 2004). It also came at the same time as Catholic schools were forced to employ teachers who did not know much about their religion. Even those who did know their religion and were enthusiastic teachers of religious education had grown up without the Bible, without a strong theological base, and without being encouraged to think for themselves in matters of religion.

The surest sign that one hundred years of instructional learning was a failure is that so few Catholics who were trained in it, even the religious teachers and clergy, had the capacity or the means to adapt when the changes of post-war Australia and Vatican II came.

Bring Back the Catechism.

In the confusion some Catholics set out to restore the world-as-they-knew-it or the world as they

imagined it was. In 1975 a small group of Catholics photographically reproduced the eighteenth edition of the New South Wales green catechism with some amendments to "bring the Catechism into conformity with the modern discipline of the Church." This newly issued copy of the old catechism had little or no impact in Catholic schools though some catechists who taught religion in state schools bought and used it.

In 1981 Father James Tierney, a Sydney priest wrote the *Catholic Family Catechism*. This was a small booklet about the size of the old catechism that was sold through the Cardinal Newman Catechist Centre, a centre set up by Father Tierney in Sydney's west. The *Catholic Family Catechism* claims that it can be equally well used for many things including children aged ten to fourteen years, for adult education, marriage preparation (especially mixed marriages), preparing young men to enter the seminary, and for priests' visits to homes, hospitals and schools. Like the reprinting of the green catechism it had little or no impact in Catholic schools though some catechists in state schools used it.

Both these attempts at restoring the old style catechism had a lot in common with a series of booklets in the Australian *Tracts for the Times* series, which began appearing in the 1970s in Sydney. In the nineteenth century in Britain John Henry Newman and his associates who made up the Oxford movement issued a series of essays that they called *Tracts for the Times*. The Australian 'tracts' came out of a sterile form of neo-Thomism and were of neither the intellectual or pedagogical caliber of Newman nor his colleagues, let alone Thomas Aquinas. They had little impact in schools.

Textbooks after *Come Alive*

The 1970s was a time of catechetical 'institutions' and catechetical conferences and in the religious education talk of the day 'pastoral' and 'catechetical' were interchangeable. The institutions included the East Asian Pastoral Institute in the Philippines, Lumen Vitae in Belgium, Corpus Christi in London, the National Catechetical Centre in Bangalore India, Boston College, and in 1973 the National Pastoral Institute in Melbourne. The opening of the last named coincided with the 1973 Eucharistic Congress, part of which was a Catechetical Conference at Melbourne University with visiting scholars such as Alfonso Nebreda from EAPI, the Indian catechist Father D. S. Amalorpavadass from Bangalore, and the American sociologist Andrew Greeley. At this time too religious teaching orders were sending some of their members to study catechetics in the United States, Britain, Europe and the Philippines. One result was a series of conferences for Marist Brothers at Hunters Hill in

Sydney called by the brothers 'Cats 1' and 'Cats 2'. Some members of the teaching orders and some of the other teachers in their schools were quickly becoming highly educated in religion.

The religious education textbooks that were used in Catholic schools after *Come Alive* are influenced by the catechetical and pastoral institutes, by those who taught and researched in them, and by their graduates teaching in schools and working in Catholic education offices around Australia. Considering them is the work of further articles.

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